



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Agriculture Secretary Tours Veteran-Owned Farms, Encourages Supporting Farmer Veterans this Holiday Season

Moon Township, PA – Today, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and Brigadier General Mark Goodwill joined veterans and partners during visits to veteran-owned farms in Allegheny and Fayette counties. During the tours, Redding thanked farmer veterans for continuing to serve their communities through agriculture after returning from military service.

“More than 7,000 Pennsylvanians are veterans who continue to serve through agriculture, by feeding local families every day,” said Redding. “We appreciate these heroes and their choice to join our strong and diverse agricultural workforce, and I encourage Pennsylvanians to connect with farmer veterans in their area and shop at local, veteran-owned businesses for the holidays.”

The first visit was to [Forever Heart Farm, LLC](#), a veteran-owned, local diversified farm in Moon Township, Allegheny County, employing sustainable agricultural practices and organic growing methods to bring their customers eggs, produce, and pastured meats. The farm has offered Beekeeping Basics for Veterans classes and other courses that bring veterans together.

The second visit was to [Heritage Farms](#), a combat veteran-owned farm that specializes in raising heritage breed cattle and hogs. After being medically retired from the Army, the owner’s dream of farming became a reality, also providing structure and a form of therapy.

“We are grateful that the Department of Agriculture always recognizes veterans and the contributions they make to Pennsylvania’s agricultural industry,” said Brig. Gen. Mark Goodwill, assistant adjutant general - Pennsylvania Air National Guard. “Veterans spend their military career serving others, and when returning to civilian life, you bring critical skillsets and a commitment to service – extremely desirable, employable skills that set veterans apart, which is evident here today.”

The Wolf Administration supports veterans engaged in farming through grant programs, marketing initiatives, and other efforts.

As part of a new grant program made possible by the Wolf Administration's [PA Farm Bill](#), the Department of Agriculture awarded \$200,000 to two veterans’ service organizations that are offering [farmer veteran grants](#). Grants of up to \$10,000 will be awarded for various agricultural business needs ranging from food safety and biosecurity planning, to equipment, marketing, or working capital.

The department has actively supported veterans engaged in farming through the [Homegrown by Heroes program](#), in collaboration with the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), and managed through

the [PA Preferred program](#). The program currently has more than 60 members, and the department is encouraging more farmer veterans to join to take advantage of marketing and other opportunities, which provide a tangible way for consumers to support and connect with Pennsylvania veterans.

Since 2015, the Wolf Administration has invested more than \$15 million to grow PA Preferred brand recognition, helping consumers identify agricultural products grown, produced, and processed in Pennsylvania, including products carrying the Homegrown by Heroes labeling and resources to support farmer veterans.

To support the increased demand for direct connection between farmers, including farmer veterans, and consumers, the department recently launched a new website for the PA Preferred brand at papreferred.com. Pennsylvanians can search for Pennsylvania products and connect with Pennsylvania farmers.

The new website offers:

- Information about connecting with veteran farmers through the [Homegrown by Heroes](#) program,
- An opportunity for Pennsylvanians to search for PA Preferred members and their products based on location,
- An accessible way for PA Preferred members to connect with customers and partner with other PA Preferred businesses, and
- A streamlined system for the department to manage membership and data.

In addition to serving consumers, the website provides an opportunity for PA Preferred members to expand their reach and grow their businesses.

To learn more about veterans in agriculture and the department's programs, visit the Department of Agriculture's [website](#).

MEDIA CONTACT: Shannon Powers, shpowers@pa.gov

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